DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 215 293 CS 006 560

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TITLE The Relationship between Reading Methods Courses and Student Teaching.
PUB DATE Feb 82
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Houston, TX, February 1982). Not available in paper copy due to marginal legibility of original document.

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Environment; Field Experience Programs; Higher Education; *Knowledge Level; *Preservice Teacher Education; Program Content; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Research; *Student Teaching; *Teacher Education Curriculum; Teacher Effectiveness; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare the performances of undergraduates on a knowledge test of reading (before and after student teaching) with the amount of effort committed to reading instruction by their respective supervisory teachers. The Artley-Hardin "Inventory of Teacher Knowledge of Reading" was administered to three classes of senior education majors following their eight-week reading methods course and again following their eight weeks of student teaching. Supervisory teachers were rated on the "Teacher Effort Scale in Reading." Results of the knowledge test showed no significant differences between student teachers with supervisory teachers rated high in teacher effort and those with supervisory teachers rated low in teacher effort. The results raised questions about the accepted intent of student teaching and the perfunctory treatment given the whole area of classroom organization and management in preservice training. If, as the results suggest, student teaching does not make a significant contribution to prospective teachers' knowledge of reading, the current emphasis on extensive field experience would seem to be of benefit only if systematic training and practice is given to student teachers in various management techniques. (RL)

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ED215293

The Relationship Between Reading Methods Courses and Student Teaching

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Paper Presented at the Annual Conference of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

Houston, Texas, February 1982

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Abstract

Despite progress in preservice programs in the reading area, educators remain split on the content of courses and just what of this content is retained by students. The purpose of this study was to compare the performances of undergraduates on a knowledge test of reading (pre and post student teaching) to the amount of effort committed to individualization in reading instruction by their respective supervisory teachers. The Artley-Hardin Inventory of Teacher Knowledge of Reading was administered to student teachers and supervisory teachers were rated on the "Teacher Effort Scale in Reading." Results showed no significant differences on the knowledge test between student teachers with high and low effort supervisory teachers. Arguments were advanced questioning an accepted intent of student teaching and the perfunctory treatment given the whole area of classroom organization and management in preservice training.

The Relationship Between Reading Method Courses and Student Teaching

Significant progress has been made in preservice education reading programs during the last two decades (Howey, 1975). In the field of reading instruction, micro-teaching, computer assisted instruction and modular instruction are examples of new training procedures. Despite the progress made in the reading field, teacher educators remain split on the issues of what should make up the content of these courses and just what of this content should be retained by students over a period of time.

However, most will agree that a knowledge of the reading process and techniques and strategies to individualize instruction are necessary equipment for prospective teachers. Following such a reading methods course, most institutions require a practice teaching period for its undergraduates under the tutelage of a local teacher. It is axiomatic, however, that variance exists both among supervisory teachers and among undergraduates in ability to individualize reading instruction. The purpose of this study was to compare the performances of undergraduates on a knowledge test of reading (pre and post student teaching) with the amount of effort committed to individualization in reading by their respective supervisory teachers. It was the investigator's hope that the comparisons would shed some light on the problem of predicting the amount of knowledge retained by student teachers as compared to the effort level to individualize in reading by respective supervisory teachers.

Hypotheses advanced were:

1) Supervisory teachers who exert a greater amount of effort on the job in reading produce higher post student teaching scores on the knowledge test in reading for their student teachers than do supervisory teachers who exert a lesser amount of effort.

2) The relationship between performance on pre and post student teaching measures of teacher knowledge in reading is not reflected identically between High and Low supervisory teacher effort in reading.

3) Student teachers will have significantly higher post student teaching test scores on the knowledge test in reading.

Method

Three classes of senior education majors were the subjects for the study. The knowledge component was measured by administering the Artley-Hardin Inventory of Teacher Knowledge of Reading to the students following their eight week reading methods course and following eight week student teaching experience.

The Artley-Hardin Inventory of Teacher Knowledge of Reading measures seven common areas dealt with in the teaching of reading. These include reading readiness, word perception, comprehension and critical reading, differentiating reading instruction, silent and oral reading, evaluation, diagnosis and correction, and goals of instruction.

The level of teacher effort of the supervisory teachers was determined by using the Blair "Teacher Effort Scale In Reading," which has four sub-scales assessing efforts to: secure and utilize

supplementary materials, provide differentiated instruction, keep records of student progress and arrange conferences dealing with individual student's progress. Utilizing this instrument, this investigator found significant differences in pupil achievement in reading in favor of high effort teachers (Blair, 1976).

Following their eight week student teaching experiences, all students rated their supervisory teachers on the effort instrument. As a result of an analysis of the judgments affected by the student teachers, two distinct groups were formed. There were 33 teachers adjudged to be High Effort teachers and 22 teachers who were determined to be Low Effort teachers.

A two-way analysis of variance technique was used to test the effect of pre and post student teaching knowledge of reading and supervisory teacher effort level (high or low).

Results

Student teachers who taught with High Effort supervisory teachers achieved a mean of 61.26 and student teachers who taught with Low Effort supervisory teachers achieved a mean score of 59.91. The analysis of variance procedure yielded an F of 2.62 not significant at the .05 level. These findings led to acceptance of the null hypothesis, suggesting that chance is a reasonable explanation for the observed differences in the means.

It was necessary to determine if the differences in supervisory teacher effort were identically reflected on the pre and post teacher measures of teacher knowledge in reading. The null hypothesis that

~~that~~ the interaction effects are zero was accepted at the .05 level. The F value relevant to this hypothesis was 1.55. Evidently, the overall effects of High Effort versus Low Effort in supervisory teachers were reflected identically on the pre and post measure of students' knowledge in reading.

A test of the means of both the pre and post scores on the knowledge test indicated further there was no significant difference between pre and post measures. Student teachers achieved a mean of 59.75 on the pretest and a mean of 61.72 on the post-test measure. The test of the means yielded an F of 1.28 not significant at the .05 level.

Insert Table 1 about here

Conclusions and Discussion

The conclusions based on the findings of this investigation are as follows: 1) The research hypothesis, which stated that supervisory teachers who exert a greater amount of effort on the job in reading produce higher post student teaching scores on the knowledge test in reading for their student teachers than do supervisory teachers who exert a lesser amount of effort, was not supported by the data; 2) the research hypothesis, which stated that the relationship between performance on pre and post student teaching measures of teacher knowledge in reading is not reflected identically between High and Low teacher effort in reading, was not supported by the data; 3) the research hypothesis, which stated student teachers will

Table 1

Basic Data on Supervisory Teachers and Student Teachers

Variable	High Effort Teachers $\bar{X}$	Low Effort Teachers $\bar{X}$	F	P Less Than
Effort	61.26	59.91	2.62	.16
Test	69.75	61.72	1.28	.26
Effort by Test			1.55	.22

have significantly higher post student teaching test scores on the knowledge test in reading, was also not supported by the data.

In examining the findings, at least two rival explanations compete with the research hypotheses in the context of this research. First, the identification of High and Low Effort teachers by the student teachers could have been affected by personal biases. This possibility, compounded with the time of the rating, is a plausible explanation. Student teachers could have rated their supervisory teachers on the basis of personal factors including their final grade for student teaching. To obtain an independent check of the student teachers' ratings concerning High and Low Effort teachers, the university supervisors involved were interviewed. Upon notification of those teachers identified as being High and Low Effort via the instrument, they concurred almost one hundred per cent with the ratings of the student teachers. These observations tend to downgrade the credibility of this rival explanation.

A second factor that might account for the findings in the study is that perhaps the hypotheses are indeed false. While no significant differences were found in terms of effort and test scores, no significant differences were found when comparing all pre and post scores on the knowledge test. Vanroosendaal (1976) in a study assessing the knowledge of reading of experienced and prospective teachers and the contribution of selected factors to that knowledge also concluded that student teaching does not make a significant contribution to prospective teachers' knowledge of reading. It is

certainly interesting to ponder the possible positive and negative effects of field experiences in teacher education and the content of reading methods courses. Negative results in this study indicate that no cognitive growth in the knowledge of reading is made during student teaching. While the opposite viewpoint is generally believed to be the case, we perhaps are fooling ourselves if we continue to think so.

Some would argue that cognitive growth during student teaching is not as important as the development of proper attitudes toward youngsters and learning, knowledge of organizational matters, discipline, and controlling affect. Certainly, student teachers' abilities to organize pupils for effective learning has much to do with their "final grade" and their subsequent effectiveness in the classroom. Through post student teaching interviews of prospective teachers, it was determined that a major concern was managing and organizing the class to effectively use reading methods and techniques. Clearly, these serendipital findings support the belief that classroom management precedes technique. Yet how much thought, discussion and training are devoted to effective organization and management of a reading class in most preservice reading methods courses? Possessing knowledge of the reading process and techniques and strategies to teach reading are needed. However, the forgotten aspect is effective management techniques for planning the knowledge to be learned, skills to be covered, controlling the discipline and affective aspects of the reading class.

Summarizing the research literature affecting pupil achievement,

Brophy and Putnam (1979) spoke to this very point as they highlighted the importance of effective classroom management techniques. The authors also noted the little preservice emphasis on the classroom indicators affecting pupil achievement of adequate level of classroom control, interactive strategies and an understanding of manageable grouping patterns in the classroom. The gap between what we expect from a classroom teacher of reading and the preservice training provided to meet the demands of the classroom is broadening, not diminishing. The federal mandate (P.L. 94-142) insuring all handicapped children an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (in many cases the regular classroom) is perhaps the greatest single contributor illustrating the gap is approaching a critical stage. The effective classroom teacher of reading today must be able to organize and manage a wider range of students in terms of ability, interests, learning rate and emotional and social maturity. Knowledge of reading methods is useless without such expertise in effective management techniques. At present, the whole area of classroom management is given perfunctory treatment in preservice education.

Recommendations

If student teaching does not make a significant contribution to prospective teachers' knowledge of reading, the current emphasis on extensive field experience would seem to be of benefit only if systematic training and practice is given to student teachers in various management techniques. Further research on the content of reading methods courses including the literature on management techniques is needed to insure proper emphasis in an area that holds the key to success or failure during the student teaching period and later in actual teaching.

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